

AMERICANIZATION: CALIFORNIA'S ANSWER

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AMERICANIZATION: CALIFORNIA'S ANSWER.

The State of California has undertaken a program of Americanization to be carried out through methods of community organization. This program is not the task of a few months, but that of years. The time for mere impulsive Americanization has gone by. If the creation of community organization is done hurriedly, done in a forced way, it is not done at all. Hundreds of thousands of individuals in California must participate, thousands of local communities must enter into the state-wide endeavor, before the Americanization program can be considered fully launched.

Yet, since the definite beginning of the movement in November, 1919, California has made some discoveries and produced some results, which, as they are the basis for planning the future in this state, may serve to point the way for other states with similar problems.

The endeavor in California, pioneered by the State Commission of Immigration and Housing, is now jointly maintained by that Commission, the State Board of Education, and the Extension Division of the State University. These three agencies are united in the California State Committee for Americanization. Under its general auspices rests the leadership in the organization of local communities, the development of a system of adult education in English and citizenship, and the training of Americanization and community workers.

WHAT IS COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION?

Community Organization means the organization of all the forces in a community. It includes:

1. Democratic organization of the citizens by neighborhoods, for effective participation in and control of their community life, and the broadening of that life.

2. Extension, creation and union of social facilities and agencies, for discovering and meeting the community's need.

Some of the conclusions thus far attained may be briefly stated as follows:

1. Foreign-born peoples respond generously to an effort for Americanization when their own organizations and individual leaders are enlisted jointly with American-born citizens in the work of community development.

2. Such development can be pursued in one way only—through neighborhood organizations, necessarily of slow growth, whose members discover their own community wants and devise their own ways of action.

3. This free development of neighborhood life nevertheless requires some leadership from outside the neighborhood. Community leadership is a new profession as well as a new avocation, and the finding and training of leaders is the first and hardest task in any movement for Americanization or citizenship.

4. Essential to the neighborhood organization, especially in its younger stages, is the assistance in social service which may be rendered by coordinated social agencies, public and private. This coordination of social agencies should be brought about within local neighborhoods.

Local community organizations are the true mainsprings of citizenship work. Accordingly, they can never be stereotyped in their activities or their procedure. They start differently, and their parliamentary devices vary. Yet in every case three principles have been apparent:

(a) The neighborhood organization must include local residents irrespective of sex, creed or party. This of itself implies a considerable range of activities within the group.

(b) Social agencies working in the locality must unite, in order that their programs may be presented to the people simply and intelligibly, and in order that the people may utilize their services to the full.

(c) The several local community organizations must be brought into touch with one another through a permanent "overhead" organization, enabling them to interchange talent, to learn from each other, and to act together. This organization ultimately should be supported and controlled by the community groups which it serves.

None of the above conclusions are strictly original to California, but it is possible that no other state has undertaken an Americanization work as wide as its boundaries, intended to develop through years, fully embodying these principles. Each detail is planned with a view to the large outcome wherein not a few but all persons, rich and poor, in country and city, and of whatever race, will be united toward the upholding of the state and the development of a creative common life.

NECESSITY FOR LEADERSHIP.

When the General Federation of Women's Clubs, in April, 1919, issued its bulletin presented by the California Commission of Immigration and Housing, and entitled, "A Suggested Program for Americanization," the human error was committed of leaping ahead of the facts and taking for granted certain matters which, on experience, developed difficulties.

Seminars in women's clubs, for example, for the training of Americanization workers, seemed quite simple. But it soon became

evident that seminars could not succeed, because there were few or no persons of competence to lead them. Americanization work could not progress until leaders themselves were trained.

Another difficulty—indeed, an emergency—grew out of a piece of legislation typical of the period of the armistice. This was a law establishing compulsory part-time classes in citizenship, to be attended by all persons under twenty-one whose English was below the sixth-grade standard. The law, in effect, required a night shift of teachers with peculiar training; but there were few such teachers, nor were there facilities for training such teachers, within the state.

For three years the Commission of Immigration and Housing had employed a director of immigrant education. After certain preliminary conferences, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction was enabled to avail himself of the services of this qualified official, who was appointed Assistant State Superintendent of Public Instruction, charged with immigrant education and the carrying out of the new law.

Thus occurred the first merger between two state agencies, looking forward to a comprehensive Americanization policy.

Private organizations, meanwhile, had begun to plan for Americanization work, but lacked trained leaders.

AMERICANIZATION INSTITUTES.

The first need, clearly, was for the education of leaders. The Commission of Immigration and Housing and the State Board of Education jointly applied to the University of California for extension courses through which this training might be provided. The State Board of Education offered a new certificate, that of "Teacher of Americanization," to persons of adequate prior attainment who should successfully complete these courses. The University offered credit toward graduation. "Americanization Institutes" were arranged, the first to take place in Los Angeles. The direction of the Institutes was under John Collier of New York City and Miss Ethel Richardson, assistant superintendent of public instruction of California.

The Institutes, from the first day, combined theory with practice. The subject matter included:

- Lectures on past experience in community organization.

- The teaching of English and citizenship.

- Problems of industrial adjustment and the economic cooperative movement.

- The administration of recreation, health, welfare work; the development of self-support and self-government in community work; and the methods of using inexpert volunteers in public service.

- Analysis of local institutions and population groups in the various cities where Institutes were held.

STATE COMMITTEE FOR AMERICANIZATION.

The State Committee for Americanization grew out of the unofficial joining of forces between the three state agencies that sponsored the Los Angeles and subsequent Institutes. This committee has the following personnel:

Chairman, Simon J. Lubin, President of the Commission of Immigration and Housing.

Mrs. Frank A. Gibson, Commissioner of Immigration and Housing, and Americanization Chairman of the General and the California Federations of Women's Clubs.

Will C. Wood, State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

E. P. Clarke, President of the State Board of Education.

Professor Leon J. Richardson, Extension Director, University of California.

Professor Frederic C. Blanchard, Assistant Extension Director.

After the third or San Francisco Institute, Governor William D. Stephens issued the following proclamation:

To the people of California:

The three departments of the state government whose work covers the field of Americanization and immigrant education—that is, the State Board of Education, the University of California, and the Commission of Immigration and Housing—have formed a joint committee, to be known as the California Committee of Public Agencies for Americanization. It will be the function of this committee to coordinate the work of the three departments in Americanization and to prevent overlapping and duplication of effort.

Such work will be of great value to the State of California, but the usefulness of this committee will be very greatly increased if it can also secure the cooperation of the many semipublic and private organizations which have interested themselves in Americanization and community organization.

I bespeak for this committee the support and cooperation of all of the state departments, of all organizations, public and private, and of all public-spirited citizens of the state.

WILLIAM D. STEPHENS,
Governor of California.

GROWTH OF COMMUNITY IDEA.

Six Americanization Institutes have been held under the leadership of John Collier and other specialists drawn from within and without the state. With each successive Institute a more direct result in community organization has been attained. Each Institute, in addition to its work of training leaders, has been in increased degree the inauguration of a community movement. Each has increasingly demon-

strated the practicability of informal methods, and the use of local leaders for the training of other local leaders. A brief record of the Institutes will therefore partly tell the story of California's developing Americanization program.

The Los Angeles Institute began November 1, 1919, and continued five weeks. Its main object, as stated, was to train school teachers, and others, for work with foreign-born groups. Field work played an important part, and out of this field work the method of community organization began to take form.

Students, assigned to various districts of the city, made studies of the social life of immigrants, the use of leisure time by young and old, economic cooperation as carried on within certain immigrant groups, the facilities for the improvement of health, etc. From these studies, discussed at round-table meetings, came the general agreement that neighborhood organization was the best means toward Americanization and in a sense the object of Americanization. This organization would involve a fuller mobilization of residents, adult and juvenile, around the school, for the more general use of the public facilities for health, recreation and study. Such groups would altogether outstrip the formal classes as mediums for the learning of English and citizenship, and in addition would work for the betterment of living standards and the development of talent. Foreign-born and native-born people alike would participate more generally in American life and each would contribute to the interest of the community.

COORDINATION OF AGENCIES.

A second aspect of community organization was made evident in the second Institute, held at Fresno. This was the coordination of social agencies, public and semipublic, into a joint city committee to sponsor the neighborhood groups. The earliest demand in Fresno was for improved health facilities, and organization in that city has begun around the idea of health. The completion of a health survey, the partial completion of a housing survey, and the maintenance of a child health center, have been the outstanding features thus far in the Fresno program. This development illustrates the point that each place, according to its own desires, will approach organization from a different angle. The large development in Fresno will begin with the autumn of the present year, 1920.

In the third Institute, at San Francisco, the school was from the outset predominant. A committee of school principals and teachers was appointed to foster and observe community organization in a chosen district. The city board of health, which was planning a new system of health centers, was added to the group. Private social agencies,

being of strongly developed individuality, were slower to respond, but today are eagerly cooperating. Assistance is being rendered by the Community Service Recreation League. Neighborhood organization is developing in a district of mixed population, strangely lacking in organized social work. The results, after a month of beginnings, are already encouraging.

Different yet was the process in Oakland, where the fourth Institute was held. Here the Americanization Committee of the Chamber of Commerce had effected a coordination of about forty public and private agencies interested in Americanization. This body sponsored the Institute. A district rich in racial groups—including most of the important European peoples—was selected, and organization was begun immediately. The interplay between this demonstration and the Institute finally established that the theoretical teaching should not precede, but accompany, the actual work of community organization.

INTER-CITY COORDINATION.

Joint action between the several cities around San Francisco Bay was also inaugurated through the Oakland Institute. The definite purpose is the compilation of data in regard to the resources of the Bay region—governmental, physical, recreational, industrial. Americanization and community workers of Oakland, San Francisco, Berkeley and Alameda are assembling this information, and experimenting as to its use in helping the immigrant toward successful participation in American life, social and economic. The data, when assembled, will be installed in branch libraries and other centers, where it will be available to all community groups, teachers, social workers and others.

A brief Institute was held by the State Americanization Committee at Sacramento. Here an Americanization Council has been formed, the members of which have conferred frequently with the Institute leaders. The first local demonstration, just being inaugurated, consists of a community council in two contiguous school districts. The demonstration involves these districts, a city park playground, and the cooperation of the school department, playground commission, Red Cross, and many other agencies, public and private. The demonstration will be a responsibility of the local residents, at whose request alone will any service be inaugurated.

The fifth demonstration is just beginning in Los Angeles. This, it will be noted, was the city of the first Institute. Enthusiasm was created, then a gap of several months ensued in which time no definite organization was effected. Later experience suggested the holding of a second Institute, four weeks in duration, with attendance limited to practical social workers already in the field. Demonstrations have been

undertaken in two neighborhoods in connection with this course. One of these neighborhoods is wholly American and the other almost wholly immigrant.

NEIGHBORHOOD INDIVIDUALITY.

In Oakland, San Francisco, Sacramento and Los Angeles, the neighborhood demonstrations are sponsored by Americanization or Community Organization Committees, city-wide in their character. These committees, when the initial demonstrations are well under way, will be in a position to extend the work to new districts.

The choice of initial activities made by the people in the various demonstrations further emphasizes the need that the program of the group shall not be imposed but self-determined, and that for best results such programs shall vary. The first community council in Oakland, for instance, asked first for an information bureau and then that its night class in English should be continued through the summer, and that the playground should be lighted for evening games, with supervision for the evening and Sunday hours. In San Francisco, the neighborhood spoke for a mothers' club, a social club for working girls, and a branch library under the charge of a person capable of directing drama. At Fresno, as stated, the health idea is more or less predominant. At Sacramento, the school facilities suggested dramatic and recreational work. Community organization may begin equally well from any of these approaches.

EDUCATION BY WOMEN'S CLUBS.

General propaganda in behalf of community organization has been made possible throughout the state through the eager cooperation of many state bodies. The annual program of the State Conference of Social Agencies was largely dominated by the community idea. The five hundred units of the California Federation of Women's Clubs furnished, through their weekly meetings, the best possible opportunity for public education.

The single most brilliant contribution of this nature was accomplished in the San Joaquin district of the California Federation of Women's Clubs, under the general leadership of the district president. Seven county federations called conventions at their respective county seats, on consecutive days beginning April 24. By request of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the county superintendents closed the schools on the respective days, and requested the teachers to assemble with the clubs at the county seats. A team of speakers, authorities upon social and physical education, Americanization (including recreation and community organization), legislation, and thrift, were transported from county to county; in each they held an all-day

session, introducing subjects which were discussed and developed by the audience. In one day, two counties were covered by reversing the morning and afternoon halves of the program and speeding up the transportation. The audiences varied from 300 to 1000, and the entire public of the San Joaquin Valley was reached through the press.

Not only was this unique experiment successful as propaganda, but a fine spirit was developed throughout the district. Teachers and club women of these seven counties now understand, as never before, their duty to each other and to the community; confusion of thought was cleared up and an interdependence developed that assures concerted and thoughtful action by the schools and clubs on a sane program of Americanization.

At these meetings, the following resolution was discussed and adopted:

WHEREAS, The organization of education for the adult is a special problem; and

WHEREAS, There is a law on the statute books of California requiring the teaching of citizenship to aliens between the ages of 18 and 21 who can not speak, read or write the English language with sixth-grade proficiency; be it

Resolved, That the-----County Federation of Women's Clubs endorse the Americanization program of the three state agencies which are combined for Americanization work; and be it further

Resolved, That the women here present urge their high school principals or city superintendents to provide in their budgets for the coming year for the adequate carrying out of this law; and be it further

Resolved, That high school principals and city superintendents be urged to appoint one member of their respective staffs, interested and sympathetic toward the problems of the foreign born, to draw up an Americanization program adapted to the local needs.

Other districts of the California Federation of Women's Clubs are projecting similar conferences for the future.

SCHOOL AMERICANIZATION PROGRAM.

The State Board of Education, one of the three agencies comprising the State Committee for Americanization, is carrying out four distinct lines of activity in California schools, all bearing on the work of community organization.

1. Each of the eight state normal schools has appointed one faculty member to serve as extension director. These directors will help and advise the teacher who is unqualified for her task in a foreign community. These extension directors will assemble soon at Sacramento for a two days' intensive conference on methods of teacher training. There-

after they will be kept in close touch with the staff of the State Committee for Americanization, and assist the Americanization teachers in their own districts.

2. Schools attended largely by children of foreign birth or parentage are being visited by state workers, who assist the teachers to the end that their instruction may take, as far as possible, the form of group activity, with a view to the later development of community organization.

3. All high school principals, three hundred in number, have been asked by the Assistant Superintendent of Public Instruction to do three things: (a) To state what budget provisions are being made for part-time Americanization classes for the coming school year; (b) to appoint, as director of Americanization, some teacher who, preferably, has attended an Americanization Institute; (c) to encourage the development of group activity in the part-time classes, and the use by the neighborhood of the school plant.

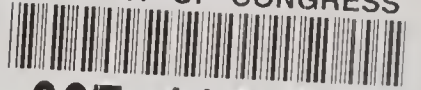
4. A new organization has been formed, with chapters in several counties—the California Association of Americanization Teachers. These groups are studying the broader ideas of Americanization, devising plans for a greater amount of neighborhood work by the schools, and developing the technic of leadership by the teacher in group activity. Certain of the chapters have begun the preparation of a State Manual for the use of Americanization teachers.

MOVEMENT INVOLVES WHOLE STATE.

How ripe was the hour for the development of community organization is shown by the fact that practically all of the steps above described have taken place within seven months' time. The staff of the State Committee for Americanization consists of but six persons. Only through generous cooperation by agencies, public and private, and by groups of many sorts could the results have been attained, and this cooperation has been forthcoming from every possible quarter.

Community organization in our national tradition goes back to the town meeting of colonial days. Today the town meeting must be adapted to the manifold work of the state and of social enterprise other than official, and its appeal must be enriched through the modern technics of health work, recreation, art, civic discussion and public education for young and old alike. Laboratories of method, and the constant training of leadership, are essential conditions of success. When they are established, an Americanization work which at the beginning reaches thousands will quickly grow until millions are reached, and reached with a profound influence. Such a multiplication of results is believed to be ahead in the State of California during the next year.

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